

UNITED STATES PATENT APPLICATION

FOR

SYSTEM AND METHOD FOR CASINO MANAGEMENT

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Related Applications

The present application claims the benefit of the following provisional patent application, which is hereby incorporated by reference in their entirety: U.S. Application Serial No. 60/241,326 entitled CASINO RESORT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM, filed on October 18, 2000 by David Keith Howington.

Field Of the Invention

The present invention relates generally to casino resort management systems, and more particularly, to evaluating and improving gaming machine performance.

Background of the Invention

Conventional casino resort management systems keep performance statistics on gaming machines. Casinos for instance, for regulatory and revenue generating reasons, keep statistics on how particular machines perform and how different locations in a casino affect performance of gaming machines. For example, gaming machines are typically programmed to have a particular hold percentage (e.g., the percentage of patron money that will be kept by the machine). The hold percentage generally varies, though and may range from 0-20%. Machines having hold percentages that vary significantly from a regulated required rate may get a resort in trouble with a gaming board or other regulatory authority, and therefore tracking is critical for that reason alone. Also, some locations in a casino may generate better performance than other locations. For example, machines located near areas where patrons tend to congregate, such as food or drink bars, may experience heavier

traffic than machines located in more obscure places within the resort. Using this information, a casino can better make decisions relating to gaming machine density and placement. Information gathered by resorts may also be used to determine the effect of other factors in a casino on gaming machine performance. For instance, it may be determined that persons standing in line near a narrow restaurant door entrance may tend to use proximately located machines more so than individuals who do not have to wait in line to enter an open area food location.

There are known gaming machine performance tracking methods using placards attached to the machines. A placard may indicate the machine brand, model and the denominations that a machine accepts (i.e., quarters or nickels). Each placard generally also has a unique identifier. Where placards are used with machines on a one-to-one basis, there is generally no problem identifying stationary gaming machines within a resort and tracking and analyzing performance information related to the machines. Tracking of gaming machine performance, however, is problematic where placards are moved from one gaming machine to another or where gaming machines are moved from one location to another. In conventional systems, if a placard is moved from a first gaming machine to another, then all information relating to the first machine can no longer be tracked using the original placard number. Similarly, if a gaming machine is moved from one location in a resort to another location in a resort and replacement of placards is a standard practice, then there is no way to track and to evaluate the performance of particular gaming machines in particular locations.

There is not now known a resort management system that accurately, automatically and efficiently provides for tracking and analysis of gaming machine performance correlated with resort location. In present systems, where gaming machines are identified using placards that may be moved to other machines periodically and where machines that are relocated periodically, such tracking and analysis is arduous at best. A system encompassing features that allow tracking and evaluation of gaming machine performance correlated with location, independent of placard identifiers and notwithstanding that such placards may be removed, is highly desirable. Accordingly, there is a need in the art for a system that can track gaming machine history, including changes in location, configuration and performance; tracks location history including game type and denomination, that tags construction activity in a casino zone; and which allows for the changing of placards infinitely without losing historical machine or location information.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention provides for a casino resort management system that accomplishes the aforementioned desirable goals and overcomes the deficiencies in the prior art using and providing a location identifier for each location within a casino resort, a placard identifier for each placard, and a machine identifier for each gaming machine all in order to provide for more efficient and accurate tracking and evaluation of machine performance.

To accomplish these and other objects, in one aspect, the present invention comprises collecting patron data throughout a resort using patron club cards, direct mail coupons, and various other methods.

In another aspect the present invention comprises managing patron data in a high performance data warehouse.

In another aspect the present invention comprises sharing patron data with other systems.

In yet another aspect the present invention comprises reporting vital patron information throughout an organization.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The present invention is illustrated by way of example, and not by way of limitation, in the figures of the accompanying drawings and in which like reference numerals refer to similar elements and in which:

FIG. 1 illustrates an exemplary machine location identifier according to an embodiment of the present invention.

FIG. 2 illustrates an exemplary placard identifier according to an embodiment of the present invention.

FIG. 3 illustrates and exemplary machine identifier according to an embodiment of the present invention.

FIGS. 4-6 illustrate exemplary interface display screens for viewing and querying historical records associated with casino machines in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention.

FIGS. 7 and 8 illustrate exemplary thin bar graphs for visually displaying a multitude of machine information according to an embodiment of the present invention.

FIG. 9 illustrates an exemplary arrangement of a casino management system in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention.

FIGS. 10-12 illustrate exemplary casino floorlayout for visually displaying a multitude of machine information in a single display screen.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

The present invention includes a system for tracking machine history, including changes in location, configuration and performance; for tracking location history, including game type, denomination, and for tagging construction activity in a casino location; and for changing machine placards without losing historical machine or location information.

The system of certain embodiments of the present invention includes the collection of patron data throughout a resort, or multiple resorts, using patron club cards, direct mail coupons, and various other methods. In these embodiments, the system manages patron data in a high performance data warehouse and shares patron data with other systems. The system also reports vital patron information throughout an organization to system operators and to other individuals having a need to evaluate and track machine and location performance.

Particularly, the tracking and management system of the present invention tracks and manages casino action including machine history, location history, and tracks historical machine and/or location information notwithstanding that machine placards may

have been substituted and placed with other machines or that machines have been moved to various other locations within a resort.

The present invention also tracks and manages patron club information. Patron club information, for example, may include spending and purchasing information about members in a club sponsored by a particular resort. In such clubs, it is typical that members may accumulate points and/or comps depending upon one or more factors including frequency of visits, gaming machine patronage, cumulative amounts spent and the like. The present invention tracks and manages such information associated with patron club members. The tracking and management system can also track patron club member preferences, including personal, family and group preference information. Patron information includes a wide variety of data including tracking patrons throughout the casino and any attached resort attractions, tracking gaming, credit restaurant, recreational and retail transactions, tracking activity of the patron's spouse and children, tracking promotional offerings and redemption by patrons, placing restrictions on a patron's club card, recording patron's preferences such as language, cocktail, restaurant, etc., establish patron's club levels, generate effective targeted marketing, evaluate groups or junkets according to profitability, score trip or history performance between different junkets, share, earn and redeem points between multiple casinos, and redeem rewards and/or comps at retail or resort locations.

Knowledge and analysis concerning such data is obviously desirable for club member and non-club member patrons for targeted marketing efforts and for improving customer service. For this reason, the system of the present invention also tracks and manages data related to patron hotel transactions and preferences; restaurant purchases,

point and comp redemption; retail purchases; and information relating to recreational activities that patrons undertake, such as golf outings, spas, movies and the like.

Returning to gaming equipment and its tracking, FIG. 1 illustrates an example of a location identifier within a casino. The location identifier identifies a machine location throughout a property. In a preferred embodiment, as shown in FIG. 1, the location identifier comprises a 14-digit alphanumeric identifier – CAS.DUN.4.1.14 that includes up to five hierarchical levels of identification. In particular, the first level “CAS” can refer to a particular establishment such as the Castle Casino; while the second level identifier “DUN” refers to a particular room, or sub-part, of the casino such as the Dungeon Room. Within this room, the equipment can be identified by its “zone” (i.e., 4) and its “row” (i.e., 1). An additional level of identification, the “seat” (i.e., 14), can be included to further pinpoint the machine location. The exemplary location identifier illustrated in FIG. 1 utilizes “periods” as separators between identification levels. Other separators, no separators, fixed field lengths for each level are some alternative formats also contemplated within the scope of the present invention and, further may be user defined or defined in accordance with a proprietary standard.

In certain embodiments, the location identifier can be printed on a variety of media and attached to a machine so that casino personnel can visually determine the identifier, bar scan the identifier, or otherwise obtain the location identifier from the machine. The location identifier can also be stored electronically within electronics of the machine or as an add-on memory device. With such electronic storage, the machine can transmit the location identifier to other electronic devices, such as a central management system that

queries the machine, via local infrared, or wired, communications methods as well as by remote wireless or wired network communications.

FIG. 2 is an example of a placard identifier useful in embodiments of the present invention. These embodiments include placard identifiers that identify particular placards placed on gaming machines. These exemplary placards are movable from one gaming machine to another without a concurrent loss of location or machine information, because each machine also has a machine identifier described below. In an embodiment, the placard identifier includes a 6-digit numeric identifier, including one level of identification and the placard identifier is user definable or may be defined according to a proprietary standard. In FIG. 2, the placard number “042052” is used to denote a machine code “04” that, for example, indicates a quarter slot machine and a machine number “2052” that simply identifies a machine within this particular denomination. Similar to the location identifier, the placard identifier can be associated with a particular machine both electronically or visually and support a variety of methods for sharing the placard information with other devices.

FIG. 3 depicts an exemplary machine identifier. Embodiments of the present invention include a machine identifier, which is a unique number provided for every gaming machine. Each remote gaming machine is capable of transmitting its unique machine identifier to a central management host when prompted or in a proactive fashion such as when an alarm or alert is initiated. In one embodiment, the machine identifier comprises an 8-digit alphanumeric identifier, where the first three alpha digits (IGT) are reserved for a manufacturer code and the last five-numeric digits (00001) are sequentially

auto generated. The machine identifier may be user defined or defined according to a proprietary standard.

The system of the present invention maintains and tracks machine and location history in a manner which allows for the changing of machine placards without losing historical machine or location information. Within this system, data relating to the machines within a casino, their changing locations within the casino, and their performance are stored in a database that permits querying, sorting and analyzing the historical machine data from a variety of perspectives. This database of information can be accumulated via manual data entry as machines and placards are moved throughout a casino or the database can be populated automatically by electronically querying one or more of the casino's machines for their identity, placard information and location identifier. One alternative embodiment includes electronic querying of one or more PDAs that are used by casino personnel to acquire and aggregate information from a number of different machines and then populating the database via the information in a PDA.

FIG. 4 is a sample system display **400**, according to an embodiment of the present invention, illustrating a graphical interface for viewing, querying and retrieving placard changes and location changes for various machines. The display **400** provides a sub-window **402** that includes a listing of gaming machines by row with corresponding columns for location identifier, placard identifier, machine identifier, denomination, machine type, machine model, the par or hold percentage, and act percentage. A pop-up screen indicates which machine (ari00004) is highlighted. The organizational menu **404** allows a user to refine the interaction with the database, for example, by providing a query window, sorting by particular fields, and limiting the time-frame of interest.

Thus, the interface of FIG. 4 allows searches to be conducted by machine ID, placard ID or location ID. Queries of various types may also be formulated such as a query to find all machines having a particular denomination or being of a particular type. Historical information may be displayed by year, quarter, month, week or day. New information concerning machines may be added and machine information may be modified on this screen by a system operator.

In addition to the information displayed in sub-window **402**, the bottom region **408** of the display **400** provides separate sub-windows **410** and **412** that detail location and placard histories, respectively, for the highlighted machine. Regarding location, the date and time of machine changes are provided in one column along with the placard identifier, the machine identifier, and revision dates. Regarding the highlighted placard identifier, columns are provided for the date and time of any placard changes for a particular machine, the location identifier, machine identifier, and revision date changes. Regarding the machine identifier, as shown in sub-window **414**, columns are provided for the date and time of any change in location, the location identifier, the placard identifier and any revision date changes. In sub-window **416**, regarding revisions, columns are set up for the date and time of any revisions, the reason for revisions, the par percentage for the highlighted machine, and a description column providing additional information regarding the machines. FIG.4 is merely an exemplary interface and other, interfaces and screen layouts that provide similar functionality are contemplated within the scope of the present invention.

The exemplary display screen **500** of FIG. 5, provides information on machine performance as opposed to machine, location, placard and revision history. For the

particular highlighted machine (ari00004), the display in FIG. 5 includes columns for the period, the coin in amount, the daily average for the coin in amount, the win/loss amount, and the daily average for the win/loss amount. These exemplary data fields are pertinent to slot machines; however, the present invention also contemplates maintaining historical information on other performance-related fields that may be appropriate for other types of machines managed by the casino. The performance data can be obtained by the management database through either manual data-entry or electronic communication between each machine and a centrally located server.

FIG. 6 contains similar location, placard, and machine information as FIGS. 4 and 5, except that FIG. 6 also includes information relating to wins, recorded currency amounts, and counts for the particular machine (ari00004) that is currently highlighted.

Using the exemplary interfaces depicted in FIGS. 4-6, casino resort management can use embodiments of the present invention to track and evaluate machine performance and location performance simultaneously. A system operator can use the information provided in the database, through the exemplary interface screens, to note, for example, that a particular location in the resort is slow and not attracting much action with the games currently in that location. Hot machines in other locations can be readily identified (by querying and sorting via the appropriate performance data) and then swapped into the slow location to improve action there. After the switch is made, the system operator can easily monitor the slow location to determine if action in the slow location has improved and by how much. By rotating other machines into the same location, the displayed information can also be used to determine which machines provide the greatest impact on the location.

The tracking features of the present invention are particularly useful where machines have been moved into hot and cold locations over a period of time. Because embodiments of the present invention allow for tracking on a machine/location basis, it is relatively easy to determine and compare the machine performance based on location. Even if placards on various machines have been replaced, the machine performance history and location history are preserved. The database of information simultaneously provides tracking information regarding revisions to machine locations, placard identifiers, and associated machines and provides vital information for decision-making to the casino. Revisions may include, but are not limited to, information regarding gaming machine moves, glass changes, software changes, peripheral additions and changes, location in/out of service information, game in/out of service information, maintenance information and alarms.

As mentioned earlier, many casinos also employ data gathering techniques (e.g., magnetic swipe cards at each machine) for identifying a patron and associated personal information, the patron's location within the casino, that patron's wagering characteristics, that patron's affiliation with other groups or patrons, promotional items or comps related to the patron, and that patron's other activities related to arriving at, enjoying and departing from the casino. Embodiments of the present invention contemplate sharing of the patron related information with the machine management database information described earlier. The sharing of this information allows scores for and evaluations of games and players. Game and player-related relationships may also be compared on any basis such as game type, denomination, location, group, age, sex, status, and club level. Additionally, virtually

any relationship comparison may be reviewed and reported using the system of the present invention making evaluation of such data simpler and faster than traditional methods.

In addition to the previously mentioned benefits provided by various embodiments of the present invention, using the performance tracking features of the invention, cool performing machines can be compared to other machines of the same type, in the same zone or location, and problems and maintenance issues can be easily identified.

Comparison of patrons can also be made over user defined periods (such as 30, 60 and 90 day periods), hot machines can be identified quickly and compared against other machines, and poor performing games can be identified along with questionable players. Indices can also be compared by seat, row, zone, or by virtually any selectable parameter related to a resort. The present invention also has case and set management features which allow for identification of under performance issues so that they may be addressed in a timely and efficient manner. The case management system allows for evaluation of “out of parameter” games, patrons, and/or groups that are under performing. The set management system allows for collection and evaluation of cases that meet certain criteria for evaluation.

FIG. 7 depicts an exemplary screen **700** for displaying the large amounts of data available to a system operator. In particular, FIG. 7 illustrates a visual analysis display tool presenting machine performance information as thin bar graphs in a data table. Because any given resort may have thousands of machines, it is virtually impossible for a system operator to view performance for more than a few machines on a typical display screen. Machine performance patterns may therefore go undetected. The exemplary data visualization display of FIG. 7 utilizes a thin bar graph format, allowing a system operator

to simultaneously visually analyze performance and other data for potentially thousands of machines on one display screen. The display table **702** includes columns for placard identification **704**, manufacturer **706**, denomination **708**, average daily wins **710**, total wins **712**, and coin in **714**. Also, moving the cursor to any location on the bar graphs displays **716** information concerning a particular machine such as the location placard, machine revision and denomination information for a particular machine, and the machine history, par percentage, model, type, on-board and any additional information.

FIG. 8 is another example of a display showing the visual analysis capability of an embodiment of the present invention. Particularly, FIG. 8 demonstrates the sortability and relational features of the visual analysis in presenting comparisons between machines regarding performance, manufacturer, denomination, average daily win, total win and coin in. For example, by viewing the average daily win column, a casino operator can easily determine (from the shape of **A** vs. **B**) the relative weakness of the machines **B** of one manufacturer as compared to machines **A** of a second manufacturer in Figure 8.

FIG. 9 depicts a block diagram of an exemplary casino management system. A management server **902** comprises one or more computing hosts that can be located locally or remotely to a casino resort. One management server **902** can be provisioned for each casino or for multiple casinos. Casino personnel interact with the management server **902** via the operator interface **904** that can run on wireless or wired computers, laptops or PDAs that can be remotely or locally located. This interface **904** provides the exemplary displays of FIGS. 4-8 as well as permits operators to enter, edit and delete data from the server **902**. The interface **904** can include means for connecting PDAs or other data collection devices in order to acquire data collected from remote machines that do not communicate directly

to the server **902**. The management server **902** also communicates with data warehouses that store patron related data **908** and machine location and performance data **906**. These databases can be remotely or locally located and can be a single warehouse or disjoint databases. Within the casino, apparatuses are used at gaming stations, ticket windows, funds cages and other attractions to collect data about patrons **910** and to collect data about the gaming machines **912**. These data collection devices and gaming machines (**910** and **912**) can be networked together and communicate with the management server **902** by either polling methods or by self-initiated communication. Alternatively, data collection devices can collect and store data and then download the collected data to an operator's PDA which is periodically used to acquire the collected data throughout a casino.

One additional benefit of the present inventive system is that the casino layout can be modeled graphically so that the machine location and performance can be presented more visually. In such an arrangement, a casino layout, or 3D virtual world, is created and stored (e.g., **934**) for use by the server **902**. In this environment, an operator can visually locate a location in the casino by selecting that location from the visual display and view the performance of the machine, or machines, at that location.

In particular, aspects of the present invention relate to techniques for visually displaying data about the machines in a casino. FIG. 10 illustrates an overhead view of machines on the casino floor. In other embodiments of the present invention, this display could also depict other type of games and gaming tables. The external database **934** can store information about each of the different floor locations in the casino. For example, each bank **1010** of machines can have stored data associated therewith which identifies the

"orientation" of the bank. This "orientation" indicates the angle of the bank **1010** in relation to some reference point (e.g., magnetic north).

When a machine is located or moved within the casino, its new location is reported to the management system. Using the stored information about the different banks **1010**, the machine can be automatically depicted on the display **1000** in its appropriate location and orientation without requiring an explicit floorplan to be pre-created for the casino floor. Also included in the display **1000** are user selectable settings that can control the features displayed. In particular, setting **1002** (or clicking on the view) allows a zoom factor to be set; setting **1004** determines the perspective of the displayed view; setting **1006** selects the type of machines depicted in screen **1000**; and setting **1008** determines by what criteria the machines are displayed.

For example, in the display **1000** of FIG. 10, "performance" has been chosen. Performance is a metric that can be identified and set by the user to mean "total coin in", "profitability", "average daily win", etc. Embodiments of the present inventive system provide the user a list of conventional performance measures and permit the user to select what definition of performance to use. This definition selection is modifiable and is not a hard-coded aspect of the system. Although FIG. 10 is in black and white, the individual squares (i.e., machines) are different colors depending on their performance. The colors that are associated with a different performance ranges are settable by the user from a palette screen so that a user can customize the display or use a default color setting.

In FIG. 10, there is also a window **1020** that displays machine information about the machine which the cursor is floating over; the machine information in the window **1020** is updated as the cursor moves. One alternative might be to require the user to click

on a machine to update the window **1020**. The machine (i.e., placard 3185) on the display **1000** can also be caused to blink so that the user knows which machine is being displayed in window **1020**. This is helpful because the cursor may span more than one machine and the machine closest to the cursor's tip is the one which updates the window **1020**.

If the machine in window **1020** is being played by a patron using a magnetic card, then patron information can be displayed in window **1024**. From the database **934**, a picture of the patron can also be retrieved and displayed to help casino personnel identify players on the floor.

The database **934** can include patron information that identifies a player who is considered a "hot player", that is, a patron whom the casino wants to make sure has an enjoyable time. Thus, the focus of display **1000** can move automatically in a sequence between machines which are being played by hot players. In this manner, the view continually updates statistics about those "hot players" without requiring the user of the system to manually move the cursor. As a new "hot player" starts playing, the focus of the display **1000** can move to the new machine and then return to its automatic sequence after a predetermined time period.

The display of FIG. 10 is only two dimensional and provides limited information to a viewer. FIGS. 11 and 12 show two possible three dimensional views of the casino floor. In FIG. 11, the display **1100** has been set via settings **1004** and **1008** to display a medium angle view according to "Combo1". In this display each machine is represented by a three-dimensional icon, for example a rectangular column **1102**, in which there are three visual cues to convey information. The column's top color is one visual cue, the column's side color (any visible side) is another visual cue, and the height of the column is another visual

cue. In an exemplary embodiment, the top color is associated with the machine's manufacturer, the side color is associated with the machine's denomination, and the height is associated with performance.

The system allows a user to set the colors for each visual cue. For example, the system can provide a list of all the different machine manufacturers and a palette of different colors. The user then associates a manufacturer (e.g., Aristocrat, IGT, etc.) with a color. The same type of operation can be performed in associating a color with each machine denomination (e.g., nickel, quarter, etc). Thus, the display **1100** displays three data points -- manufacturer, denomination, and performance -- in three dimensions.

FIG. 12 depicts a low angle view of alarm conditions. Again, a user is presented with a window that lists the various alarms and is permitted to associate a color with each alarm. In this example display **1200**, the side of the column **1202** is associated with the general type of alarm (e.g., mechanical, electronic, customer service, etc.) and the top color is associated with the specific alarm (e.g., coin jam, hopper empty, etc.). In this embodiment, the height of the column indicates the age of the alarm, with the higher column indicating an older alarm. Accordingly, a user can quickly view the alarms currently active and prioritize them according to severity as well as age.

The difference in viewing angles helps exaggerate certain aspects of the three dimensional view. For example, the low angle view of the alarm screen in FIG. 12 allows the height and side color to predominate. The medium view of FIG. 11 allows both the side color and top color to be equally viewable while a high angle view (not shown) would allow the top color to predominate and make differences in column height less discernable,

but still visible. This functionality accents desired aspects of the data to increase its speed of recognition, and therefore adds value in its presentation to the user.

The exemplary screens of FIG. 10-12 are meant as examples only and are not meant to limit any embodiment of the present invention to only the specific screens illustrated. One of ordinary skill would easily recognize that the underlying visual display methods described herein can be used to simultaneously visualize any three data characteristics associated with a machine on the casino floor.

The casino management system architecture and methods herein described include a number of additional benefits and features that simplify and automate management and tracking of machine and patron data for a casino.

In particular, the interface provided by the management server **902** to a casino operator includes context sensitive help information. Similar to the pop-up windows available on many web pages, an operator can “mouse-over” a field on the interface of FIG. 4, for example, to reveal explanatory information about that field. This “help” information as well as the field names and identifiers can support multiple languages which can be selected and changed by an operator.

One particular benefit of the present inventive system is that the burden of daily record keeping and accounting required of casinos can be significantly reduced. For example, tracking slot machine “jackpots” and “fills” can be easily accomplished. In one example, a casino employee can arrive at a machine, swipe an ID card through a PDA, scan one or more machine identifiers (e.g., placard) using the PDA, enter the transaction amount and type (i.e., jackpot or fill), and eventually download the data to a central repository.

Workorders and other maintenance activity can also be automated. In response to a machine alarm, or other more-traditional indicator, a maintenance personnel can be dispatched to a machine, swipe an ID card through a PDA, scan a machine identifier, identify and record a maintenance activity (which can even include removing parts from inventory), and provide this historical maintenance data as requested.

Because of the communications capabilities of the various machines, the machines can determine and announce, themselves or through the server **902**, a “jackpot” or “fill” condition. In response, a page, e-mail or other electronic notification is generated to dispatch personnel and the type and timing of the response is tracked. Activity response times can be monitored so that uncompleted tasks can be identified and escalated to produce additional dispatch messages. The server **902** can maintain and store **932** work schedules and work assignments in order to automatically determine which personnel to dispatch according to the appropriate machine’s location.

In certain embodiments of the present invention, the central data collection features and the networked communication (e.g., **934**) of the casino machines and the server **902** results in additional benefits. For example, playing different machines and partaking of the resort attractions can be accomplished using magnetic cards (similar to using a credit card to pay-at-the-pump) instead of traditional currency and coin methods. Within this embodiment of the present invention, funds for a particular patron can be electronically identified and transferred to the casino. As the patron enjoys the casino’s attractions using a magnetic, or other smart technology, card, the funds associated with that patron is adjusted positively and negatively, and eventually the patron can cash-out at a casino cage.

In one exemplary embodiment, the magnetic cards are called "GO-CARDS" and permits anonymous, cashless paying at a casino. According to this embodiment, patrons

pick up a GO-CARD;

place the GO-CARD in a electronic funds transfer machine or charging station;

(if necessary) place money in the charging station;

play each machine having a card reader in the casino without cash with credits being accumulated or depleted;

at each machine, press the cash-out button and all remaining credits are stored on the GO-CARD;

move to other machines;

cash-out at the casino cage or an automated GO-CARD cash-out station.

In other embodiments, the GO-CARDS have one or more of the following features:

pin numbers for added security against loss;

limited amount of downloadable credits;

limited balances which can accumulate;

using paper receipts from each machine for lost card security;

marketing promotion which can "charge-up" player club cards and players redeem direct mail free-play offers right at the machine, eliminating the need to go to the cage, and eliminating coupons or tickets;

restricting promotional credits to play only.

Furthermore, cashless ticket accounting can be implemented at the casino to complete, issue, track, verify and pay-out tickets right at the game or at a casino cage.

In the foregoing specification, the invention has been described with reference to specific embodiments thereof. It will however be evident that various modifications and changes may be made thereto without departing from the broader spirit and scope of the invention. The specification and drawings are, accordingly, to be regarded in an illustrative rather than a restrictive sense.